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STATE FOR WHA/CCA AND WHA/CAR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/08/2018
TAGS: ETRD ETTC PREL CU TD
SUBJECT: TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO - LIBERTAD ACT REVIEW

REF: SECSTATE 126578

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs Leonard Kusnitz, reasons 1.4 (b/d)

(U) This message responds to reftel questions.

¶1. (C) QUESTION: Has the host country, in Post's opinion, worked to promote the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba?

ANSWER: Post is not aware of any GOTT initiatives promoting democracy and human rights in Cuba.

¶2. (C) QUESTION: Has the host country made public statements or undertaken other governmental actions, such as resolutions in the national assemblies condemning human rights abuses in Cuba; or actions in support of civil society in Cuba through host country's diplomatic missions or other fora?

ANSWER: The GOTT has made no public statements or undertaken any governmental action to condemn human rights abuses in Cuba or support civil society in Cuba.

¶3. (C) QUESTION: Have there been any high-level diplomatic visits between Cuba and the host country in the past six months?

ANSWER: Prime Minister Patrick Manning attended the December 7-8 CARICOM-Cuba summit meeting in Santiago de Cuba. In May 2008 the GOTT dispatched its first ambassador to Cuba, Lester Efebo Wilkinson, a former Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Wilkinson, a poet, playwright and stage director, was previously Director of Culture and Head of Cultural Affairs at the CARICOM Secretariat.

¶4. (C) QUESTION: Did the host country offer or deliver humanitarian or other assistance to the Cuban people in the wake of the major damage caused by Hurricanes Gustav (August 30) and Ike (September 8)?

ANSWER: The GOTT contributed US\$1 million to Cuba in early September to support hurricane relief efforts.

¶5. (C) QUESTION: What is the nature of investments (and names, if known) that host country businesses have in Cuba? What host country businesses participated in the Havana Trade Fair (November 3)?

ANSWER: Post is aware of no Trinidad & Tobago (T&T) private companies or individuals with significant presence or investments in Cuba; T&T's exports to Cuba consist primarily of bulk commodities (chemicals, iron and steel, fertilizer) which do not require producers to establish a presence in Cuba. GOTT trade agencies and the T&T Manufacturers Association organized a Trinidad and Tobago booth at the November 2008 Havana Trade fair; eight T&T companies participated, including Sacha Cosmetics Ltd, which launched

its product line in the Cuban market during the fair. Separately, the South Trinidad Chamber of Industry and Commerce organized a November 24-28 energy services trade mission to Cuba, with support from the GOTT trade facilitation office in Havana; eight T&T-based energy services companies participated in meetings with state-owned and foreign energy companies operating in Cuba.

¶6. (C) QUESTION: Are there any bilateral trade agreements or other cooperative agreements between host country and Cuba?

ANSWER: Trinidad & Tobago does not have a bilateral trade agreement with Cuba, but as a member of CARICOM, T&T has ratified the trade agreement between CARICOM and Cuba. In September 2007, T&T established a trade facilitation office in Havana to serve as a conduit between T&T manufacturers and Cuban state companies. The GOTT has concluded cooperative agreements with Cuba relating to the medical and agricultural exchange programs described in paragraph 7.

¶7. (C) QUESTION: Are there any exchange programs between host country and Cuba, including but not limited to: scholarships for host country nationals to study in Cuba; Cuban-paid medical travel for host country nationals; and Cuban doctors working in host country?

ANSWER: Twenty-two Cuban doctors and eighteen Cuban nurses arrived in Trinidad on May 18, 2007, to begin two-year contracts with the Ministry of Health, working at public health facilities. They replaced seventy Cuban medical personnel whose contracts to serve in T&T expired earlier in ¶2007. Prime Minister Manning has told us in the past that he does not want to expand this cooperation. A team of Cuban agricultural advisors has been working in Trinidad since June 2008 on a 200-acre demonstration farm in Tucker Valley, Chaguanas, in a joint venture between the GOTT and Cuba aimed at introducing Cuban organic farming techniques to T&T.

The project's first harvest is expected to reach the local market by late December 2008.

¶8. (C) Post believes it is in the U.S. national interest to suspend Title III of the Libertad Act for Trinidad and Tobago, based on its contribution to U.S. energy security as a reliable supplier of oil and gas and its importance as an economic, political, and security leader in the eastern Caribbean. Trinidad and Tobago also will host the next Summit of the Americas, April 17-19, 2009.

KUSNITZ